

# LEGISLATURE TO CUT SHORT GAS TRUST ROBBERY AND SAVE THE PUBLIC FROM FURTHER EXTORTION.

**Arguments in Support of The Evening World's Fight at the Hearing Before the Cities Committees of the Two Houses on the Bills Looking Toward City Ownership of Gas Plants.**

**Bills to Be Introduced Providing that a Forfeiture of Charter Shall Follow Outrageous Violations of the Law by the Merciless Combine Which Holds Up the Public.**

(Special to The Evening World.)

ALBANY, March 4.—New York members of the Legislature have become thoroughly aroused over The Evening World's exposure of the extortions of the Gas Trust. In order to afford relief to the people who are suffering from the conditions applying to the supervision of the monopoly the Legislature will be asked within a few days to pass at least two drastic measures.

The first will be to amend that section of the charter of Greater New York which restricts the power of the Commissioner having in charge the regulation of the quality of gas served. Under existing laws the quality of gas can be tested only at certain intervals. The amendment will make it obligatory upon the Commissioner of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity to make analysis of the gas furnished by all the companies of New York at frequent and regular intervals and to hold these companies to the provision of their charters that requires them to furnish gas of a designated quality.

## PENALTY NOT STRONG ENOUGH.

As it is now, his authority is limited. He can do nothing whatsoever in the way of bringing companies that furnish inferior gas to book. The fine provided for violations is so small and the number of violations required is so out of proportion to the importance of the question that the law is almost farcical. If the Commissioner is equipped with the power to go into any gas works and make tests at any time—or to make tests of the gas supplied through any burner at any time—the effect will be that the companies will be compelled to furnish gas of good quality if the penalty imposed for violations is sufficiently strong.

Instead of the present fine of \$100, it is proposed to make three successive violations of the law providing for the supply of gas of good quality equivalent to the forfeiture of the charter of the offending company. It is well known in Albany that the only reason why the companies maintain a semblance of separate existence is to protect the charters under which they operate.

Another amendment to the charter is expected to provide for the inspection of gas meters whenever such inspection is called for by a consumer. Inspector Alexander has so few men working under him in New York that even though inspections were called for frequently he could not send men around to do business. The amendment will increase his force to such an extent that if a consumer believes that he is being robbed he can, by sending to the office of Mr. Alexander, have a skilled man to look over his meter within a few hours.

## EXPENSE NOW FALLS ON CONSUMER.

At the present time the expense of inspecting a meter falls upon the consumer and ranges from 40 cents to \$1. It is proposed to make the gas companies stand the expense of meter inspection. Another evil that is to be remedied is the placing of incorrect meters.

A gas meter costs the companies an average of \$4.70. There is a great deal of leather in its mechanism, and leather, under the influence of heat, dries and becomes stiff, like leather in an old boot. Thousands of meters in New York have not been inspected for five years. The idea for relief is to have meters taken care of at the expense of the gas companies.

Probably the most important measure of relief proposed is the provision that when a meter is read the man who reads it shall leave with the consumer a copy of the record. This will enable consumers to go at once to their meters and verify the readings of the gas index. Under prevalent conditions no gas user in a flat-house, whose meter is in the cellar, knows when the man who compiles his bill visits the house. The amendment contemplated will not only furnish the consumer a check upon the reading of his meter but will compel honest reading of the meter.

Inspired by the disclosure of existing conditions made by The Evening World the New York members of the Legislature have concluded to give their people pure gas and to make the gas companies charge only for what is used. The gas companies have had a hand in the making of the charter, and the only way to remedy conditions is to amend the charter.

## LEGISLATURE IS AROUSED.

Arguments in support of The Evening World's fight for fair treatment by the Gas Trust's oppressive methods were listened to by the Senate and Assembly Cities Committees yesterday. The occasion was the hearing on Senator Dowling's and on Assemblyman Edward A. Miller's bills which submit to a vote in New York City the question of municipal ownership of gas, electric light and street railway plants.

At the Assembly hearing Mr. Miller said: "The necessity for public ownership of the gas and electric light plants is being demonstrated every hour by the New York Evening World in its present crusade against the big Gas Trust. In every borough the cry goes up that the corporations are arbitrary, insolent, unfair, unjust and apparently incompetent."

Representative-Elect Robert Baker said: "For thirteen years in Brooklyn I have seen the price of gas maintained at an outrageously high figure. It does not cost 35 cents a thousand to produce it. We have to pay \$1. The railway companies are just as oppressive."

Ex-Assemblyman Bartley Wright made comparisons with the city of Glasgow, which had established a municipal gas plant in 1869. Gas then had been \$1.14 a thousand; to-day it is 60 cents.

Michael Raphael, of the Central Federation of Labor of Brooklyn, stated that labor generally favored the referendum on the gas and electric light proposition. The same speakers appeared before the Senate Committee.

## STATE TESTS GAS METERS ON TRUST'S OWN PROVING.

An Evening World reporter was conducted through the meter department of the Consolidated Gas Company at Twenty-first street, and First avenue to-day and initiated into the mysteries of meter proving. This is what he learned:

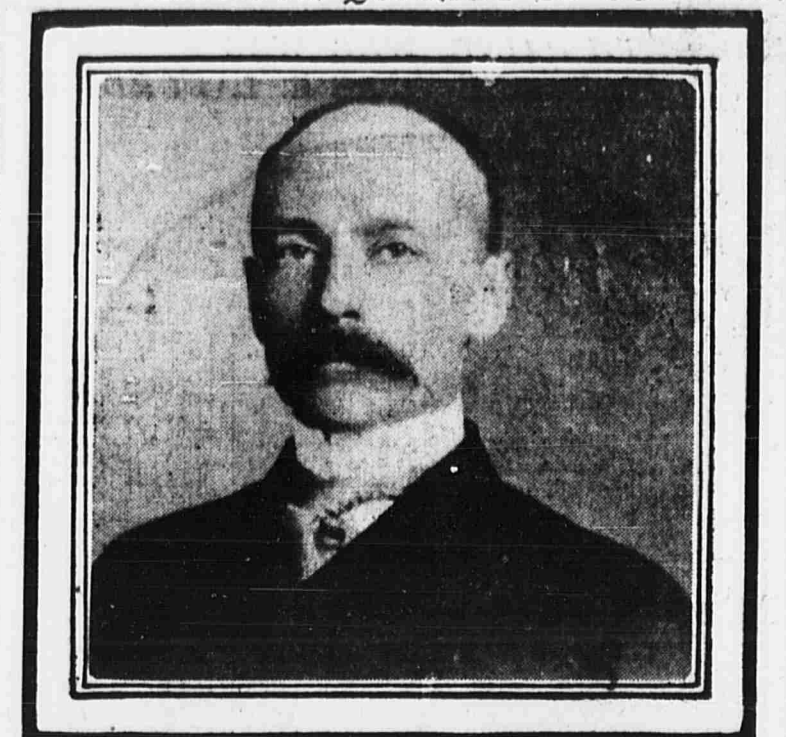
Standard provers, which is the name of the machine by which a meter is tested, are employed to determine whether a meter leaks, runs slow or runs fast or runs not at all. These provers are operated by air and water—the water being employed to buoy up the cylinder which contains the air which passes through the meter to be tested. The temperature of water and atmosphere in the room in which the tests are made must be identical. A variation in temperature means false results in the test. Uniformity of temperature is attained by the use of a coil of water which runs into the water tank and in admitting steam, the water is heated to the temperature of the room, which is usually about seventy-five or eighty degrees.

### How Meters Are Proved.

By connecting the defective meter by means of a tube with the prover the air contained in the air chamber of the meter is allowed, under a seven-eighths inch pressure, to pass through the meter. This pressure, it was explained, is of the same degree maintained in the company's mains. The reporter observed that all of the provers were gauged at this identical pressure and that no provision was made for the testing of any meters at a higher pressure.

Stationed in the repair shop or meter department are two State Gas meter inspectors. The provers used by the company are also the means employed by the State inspectors to arrive at results. When a meter is complained of by a consumer it is brought to the shop and tested. If the complaint has been registered with the State Inspector the assistant at the gas works takes charge

## ROBERT GRIER MONROE, WHO CAN IMPROVE QUALITY OF OUR GAS.



Robert Grier Monroe, Commissioner of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity, salary \$7,000 a year; appropriation asked for his department this year, \$5,069,513.58.

Duties include directing his employees to inspect the illuminating gas of every company at least twice a year; gas may be inspected as frequently as the Commissioner may think best, not oftener than once a week.

Statute provides that when gas illumination shall not comply with the reasonable and proper standard of purity as fixed by the Commissioner a fine of \$100 shall be paid by such company to the city.

Commissioner Monroe says:

"I have found few violations of statute; I have no jurisdiction over gas meters; gas in New York is generally up to the standard by which we are directed to measure."

Of that particular meter and causes it to be tested. It is carried to the proving bench and there attached to the prover. The meter may be leaking, fast, slow or otherwise defective. It is the business of the prover to determine just what is the matter with the meter. If it is remedied the State Inspector causes a brass sheet tag to be soldered to the meter indicating that it has been duly inspected and tested by a State official. It is then registered in a book and sent back to the premises from which it was taken.

### It Is the Company's Prover.

But the fact remains that the meter, as well as the several hundred thousand meters inspected in like fashion by the State Inspectors, had been tested by a proving machine owned by the gas companies and kept under their absolute control.

Then, too, the employees of the company had done the testing, sometimes in the presence of the inspector and sometimes when the inspector was not present. It is through the courtesy of the gas company also that the testing of meters for the State officials is permitted. The State Inspectors have no independent means of ascertaining whether or not the meters are reliable. They must depend upon the plant of the gas company. The inspectors are called in at once after the meter is found to be defective. The inspectors are personally owned provers. Inspector Brady, who conducted the reporter over the plant, said that sufficient guarantee was furnished because the company tested its own meters and the inspectors used by the State Inspectors.

Not only is the inspector required to

supervise the tests of meters complained of to the inspection bureau, but also all meters made for the gas companies and discovered by the companies' agents to be defective in some particular. When meters are reported to be slow or such condition is revealed in the bills to the consumer that meter is at once taken out by the company without the consumer's request and brought to the repair shop. The company is always prompt to discover a slow meter and has it replaced. There it is repaired. It is money to be coined by putting in fast meters, but the slow ones, which are not the rule by any means, always receive immediate attention.

### They Find Slow Meters.

Slow meters mean a saving to the consumer. Thus the slow meter is bound to be detected through the medium of the business office of the company. Where bills are compared regularly, if there is a falling off in the amount of the bills from any particular section or consumer those bills are laid aside for further reference.

An investigation follows. If the report of that inspection indicates that the consumer is using as much gas as usual while the bills show a discrepancy the cause is at once attributed to the meter. It is promptly hauled out, another substituted and the suspicious meter is returned to the plant. There it is tested to suit the requirements and when it is reinstated that meter is bound to fill all the expectations of the company. The bills soon resume the former figures.

proposition had been made in good faith and that he would not only build boats but plenty of them and fast ones, which would furnish a splendid service if he got the franchise.

Albert P. Boardman, of Tracy, Boardman & Platt, representing the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, stated to the Commission that his clients were prepared to improve the service by using as soon as the needed boats could be built.

"Why don't you settle this whole affair by giving a commission to the State Engineer?" asked Comptroller Grant.

"We are willing to reduce the fare to three cents just to hear the protestants," declared Mr. Boardman. "We are now losing thousands of dollars a year even at the present rate."

The Comptroller's question was cheered to the echo, while Mr. Boardman's answer was laughed at derisively by the Staten Islanders.

Lawyer Clarke Blued.

Lester W. Clarke, counsel for the Staten Island Transit Company, next addressed the Commission. He declared that the proposition of the Rogers interests were calculated to create a monopoly of the transit facilities of the island to the detriment of the steam road interests. Groans and hisses greeted Mr. Clarke's next statement.

"There has not been a public meeting of protest held on the island, that is the worst of the matter," he said. "These so-called mass meetings have been 'fixed' affairs, all manipulated by H. H. Rogers."

They were prepared to register their disapproval effectively, when the Mayor announced that the commission was ready to hear the protestants.

H. H. Rogers or interested in properties were fully two hundred Staten Islanders present, many of them women, who are equally indignant over the expressed determination of the Dock Commissioner to renew the franchise on practically the old terms.

E. J. Wheeler presented a resolution which he read. It was adopted at a mass-meeting of residents of Staten Island, and held last night at St. George. The resolution was strongly condemnatory of the avowed purpose of the Dock Commissioner to "foist the old ferry system upon the people of Staten Island for the coming twenty-five years—the proposed term of the franchise."

M. P. Doyle, representing the Third Ward Citizens' Association of Staten Island, presented an address signed by 125 prominent men of the island who expressed their approval of the Dock Commissioner's plan.

Doyle said that many of the objectors had a personal axe to grind. The speakers, he said, were persons employed by the ferry company, or had investments near the proposed new terminals, or had invested in unproductive properties in the interior of the island.

"This ferry company has and is now operating three steam railroad lines through Staten Island," said Doyle. "These lines afford us what the trolley roads owned by Mr. Rogers never can give."

Borough President Cromwell spoke in favor of the Dock Commissioner's plan. "But," he said, "I am in favor of any good plan which can secure for our borough an adequate ferry service, and I express absolute belief in Grangeville. He is one of the greatest physicians in England, and attends royalty."

Chevalier J. P. Spangler writes from Rome, Italy: "Please send me by mail, registered, as usual, with bill, 250 pounds of Oregraine. I would not get along without them. Also send same to my John Tyler, Portland Place, London, whose card I inclose. Sir John generally disapproves of patent remedies, but expresses absolute belief in Grangeville. He is one of the greatest physicians in England, and attends royalty."

## IMPROVE QUALITY OF GAS.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

I am very glad that you are giving so much space to the poor quality of gas and excessive bills now furnished to the consumers of this city. Nothing but PUBLICITY will give relief. Keep up the agitation.

I have written to Commissioner Robert Grier Monroe, calling his official attention to the low grade of gas furnished last evening in West One Hundred and Sixth street, where I live. Let others write.

There is a standard for the light-giving quality of gas regulated by city ordinance and contained in the companies' charters. It is the duty of the Commissioner of the Department of Water, Gas and Electricity to see that the quality and standard of the gas are maintained.

More and more PUBLICITY and the Commissioner must act and the companies must head. Yours truly, PUBLICITY. (Name and address inclosed.)

## SEND YOUR COMPLAINTS OF GAS EXTORTION TO THE EVENING WORLD.

The Gas Trust says there are no complaints of overcharge from its victims. To refute this statement The Evening World will print all complaints sent to this office. Each communication must have name and address of the writer, not for publication unless desired. Write only on one side of the paper.

## DETAILS OF GAS ROBBERY BY VICTIMS OF THE TRUST.

There is no falling off in the complaints against the Gas Trust sent to The Evening World. Some of them read as follows:

### Hopes to See Trusts Abolished.

To the Editor of The Evening World: My gas bills are higher than ever. In December of last year my bill was \$1.50. In January it was \$2.50, and in February it was \$2.50.

I hope to see the day when the trust companies are demolished.

MRS. BROCK.

### Her Bill More Than Doubled.

To the Editor of The Evening World: I have dealt with the Consolidated Gas Company for twenty-nine years. When gas was \$2.25 per 1,000 cubic feet, in the old days, my bills ran from \$1.75 to \$2.00. Now they run from \$2.50 to \$3.00.

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### Here Is Proof of Trust.

To the Editor of The Evening World: I see in The Evening World that Secretary Robert A. Carter, of the Consolidated Gas Company, denies that there is any affiliation between the different gas companies, but I think the following will prove that there is some kind of an agreement between them.

In the month of May, 1902, I moved to my present place of abode, and I found a meter belonging to the Central Union Gas Company connected with the pipe which supplies my rooms. I went to the office of the Standard Gas Company and I told them I wanted a meter connected. They sent one of their men with the meter, and when he saw that a meter belonging to the Central Union was supplying my rooms he refused to touch it, telling me that one company never set a meter where one belonging to the other company was already connected. I then asked him why that was, and he said that, as it

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out the meter. I hope this will find room in your most valuable paper.

H. SCHILLER, No. 720 President street, Brooklyn.

Went from \$6 to \$14.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

I am another of the many victims of the gas extortion which has been in very active operation during the past three months. My bills heretofore were between \$4 and \$6, but for the last three months have advanced to the last one was an even \$14. It is not possible for consumption of gas to increase in such degree and there is no other solution than that the Gas Trust is using some dishonest means to make the meters register something besides gas.

W. B. BBAOH, No. 160 West Ninety-first street.

### \$10 a Month for Two Lights.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

Two years ago my gas bill averaged \$10 a month for twenty lights (I have clear stores), which I thought was too much, so I changed to electricity, and used only two lights; but my bills now are never less than \$8 and run to \$10.

I notified the State Gas Inspector, who examined my meter, and he said it was fast, and the Consolidated Gas Company allowed me the enormous sum of \$2.50 for two years' overcharge.

After making numerous complaints the best I could get from the gas company was "If you don't like our gas, go to another company."

These are facts which I can prove by their bills.

ABE BREEDER, No. 442 Eighth avenue.

### Make the Meters Legible.

To the Editor of The Evening World:

If a law is to be enacted to check the imposition of the gas companies permit me to suggest two other provisions for consideration:

First—That plain indicators be placed on the meters to enable every one to understand them—such as are now in

use on the water meters in many cities.

Second—That a statement of the number of feet of gas consumed be left with the householder at the time the record of the meter is taken, to enable consumers to verify their bills.

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